

The Medal of Freedom is the highest civil honor that a President can bestow. By an executive order of John F. Kennedy, the medal is designed to recognize great contributions to national security, the cause of peace and freedom, science, the arts, literature, and many other fields. The eight men and women came to this distinction by very different paths. Each of them, by effort and by character, has earned the respect of the American people, and holds a unique place in the story of our time.

The story of an old order, and the glimmers of humanity that would one day overtake it, was unforgettably told in a book by Miss Harper Lee. Soon after its publication a reviewer said this: "A hundred pounds of sermons on tolerance, or an equal measure of invective deploring the lack of it, will weigh far less in the scale of enlightenment than a mere 18 ounces of a new fiction bearing the title *To Kill a Mockingbird*."

Given her legendary stature as a novelist, you may be surprised to learn that Harper Lee, early in her career, was an airline reservation clerk. (Laughter.) Fortunately for all of us, she didn't stick to writing itineraries. (Laughter.) Her beautiful book, with its grateful prose and memorable characters, became one of the biggest-selling novels of the 20th century.

Forty-six years after winning the Pulitzer Prize, *To Kill a Mockingbird* still touches and inspires every reader. We're moved by the story of a man falsely accused—with old prejudice massed against him, and an old sense of honor that rises to his defense. We learn that courage can be a solitary business. As the lawyer Atticus Finch tells his daughter, "before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

Years after *To Kill a Mockingbird* was put to film, the character of Atticus Finch was voted the greatest movie hero of all time. It won Gregory Peck the Oscar. He was said to believe the role "brought him closest to being the kind of man he aspired to be." The great actor counted Harper Lee among his good friends, and we're so pleased that Gregory Peck's wife, Veronique, is with us today. Thank you for coming.

One reason *To Kill a Mockingbird* succeeded is the wise and kind heart of the author, which comes through on every page. This daughter of Monroeville, Alabama had something to say about honor, and tolerance, and, most of all, love—and it still resonates. Last year Harper Lee received an honorary doctorate at Notre Dame. As the degree was presented, the graduating class rose as one, held up copies of her book, and cheered for the author they love.

To Kill a Mockingbird has influenced the character of our country for the better. It's been a gift to the entire world. As a model of good writing and humane sensibility, this book will be read and studied forever. And so all of us are filled with admiration for a great American and a lovely lady named Harper Lee.

Now I call on the military aide to read the citations for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

MILITARY AIDE. Harper Lee. Harper Lee's beautiful book is a meditation on family, human complexity, and some of the great themes of American life. At a critical moment in our history, *To Kill a Mockingbird* helped focus the nation on the turbulent struggle for equality. The novel became an instant American classic and earned her a Pulitzer Prize. Nearly half a century after its publication, her work continues to captivate new readers who encounter its compelling power for the first time. The United States honors Harper Lee for her out-

standing contribution to the great literary tradition of America.

THE PRESIDENT. Thank you all for coming. Laura and I now invite you to a reception here in the State Dining Room. I hope you've enjoyed this ceremony as much as I have. May God bless you all. Thank you.

A PROCLAMATION HONORING RAYMOND "SKEET" BOTDORF FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE MILITARY AND UNITED STATES VETERANS

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker:

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf was a member of the Army Band Corps; and

Whereas, he earned a Bronze Star for capturing a Nazi Prison Officer who tried to escape from a prison camp in Czechoslovakia; and

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf is a member of the VFW Post 63 in Dover, Ohio; and

Whereas, he plays TAPS for an average of 100 funerals a year; and

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf has honored 3,000 veterans by playing TAPS at their funerals; and

Whereas, Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf is saluted for his service and dedication; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that along with his friends, family, and the residents of the 18th Congressional District, I commend and thank Raymond "Skeet" Botdorf for his contributions to his community and country.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM RHODES

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor William Rhodes of Gandeeville, WV, for attaining the rank of Eagle Scout.

William has been involved as a member of the Boy Scouts for the past 6 years as a member of Troop 434 sponsored by Walton Union Church in Walton, WV. For his Eagle Scout project, William improved the facilities at Bessie Jones Memorial Park. He constructed a handicap accessible bridge, trash can receptacles, three benches, and most notably built a trail at the park complete with signage, so walkers could easily navigate their way.

His accomplishments and hard work demonstrate the high standards held by those who achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. He has been involved with his local 4-H Club and played freshman and junior varsity football for the Roane County Raiders. William is currently a junior at Roane County High School and attends Roane-Jackson Vocational School, where he is studying auto mechanics.

I extend my congratulations to William and look forward to his future accomplishments. Roane County is fortunate to have such a dedicated, patriotic, young man among its citizens.

RECOGNIZING 200 YEARS OF RESEARCH, SERVICE, AND STEWARDSHIP BY NOAA AND ITS PREDECESSOR AGENCIES

SPEECH OF

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 4, 2007

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA has been the leader in national research on oceans and the atmosphere, and their effect on the human environment.

NOAA evolved from the Survey of the Coast, established in 1807, to an organization that provides daily forecasts, storm warnings, and climate monitoring to a variety of organizations that support marine commerce. NOAA has a presence in each of the 50 States and countries worldwide. NOAA takes part in the most advanced, cutting-edge research, using new and innovative technologies to ensure this country's economic future.

I am very proud that Western North Carolina is home to the National Climate Data Center, the largest archive of weather and global climate related data, including that data collected by NOAA. The center holds data as old as 150 years old, and as recent as a few hours ago.

NOAA, and NCDC, are integral to our Nation's success as a global economy. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the contributions of NOAA.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF VERICE M. MASON

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2007

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise in celebration of the life of my dear friend Verice M. Mason who passed away December 2, 2007 at the age of 55. A native of Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, Verice resided in Washington, DC prior to moving to Metuchen, New Jersey 30 years ago. A 1970 graduate of Theodore Roosevelt High School in Washington, DC, Verice would go on to obtain her undergraduate degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio and later her law degree from Rutgers School of Law in Newark.

Verice had a long and distinguished professional career. She served as Senior Vice President and General Counsel for MDA Advantage Insurance Company, responsible for all legal and regulatory matters for the company. Prior to joining MDA Advantage, Verice was appointed chief of the Authorities unit in the Governor's Counsel Office in 2004 by Governor Richard J. Cody, where she represented the Governor's interests and served as his liaison to over 40 authorities, boards and commissions.

Other positions held by Verice include Senior Vice President and General Counsel for the MIIX Group, Inc., partner in New Jersey's office of Peterson, and assistant commissioner